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U.S. POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE ARRESTS 12 INDIVIDUALS
FOR CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT MONEY ORDER FRAUD
"Operation Rai\$ing Money"

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – Yesterday, a federal grand jury indicted twelve (12) individuals as a result of an investigation run by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, announced today United States Attorney Rosa Emilia Rodríguez-Vélez. From April through approximately September of 2010, the defendants conspired to purchase a total of one hundred nine (109) Postal Money Orders from various Post Offices around Puerto Rico in a variety of denominations including three cents (\$.03), eight cents (\$.08), one dollar (\$1.00), and one dollar eleven cents (\$1.11).

After purchasing the money orders, defendant [1] Christian Román-Vélez, the purported leader of the conspiracy, who is also facing charges of Social Security Fraud and Aggravated Identity Theft, on his own, and together with other co-conspirators, altered the money orders in one of two ways: by either "cutting out" and restoring the background or by abrading the paper causing the numbers and characters to be scraped away. Then, using ink jet technology, the defendants would "raise" the value of the money orders to \$500.00 or \$1,000.00. After "raising" the amounts of the money orders, the defendants would visit supermarkets, hardware stores, check cashing establishments, post offices, hotels, and casinos to cash the altered money orders and thereby illegally obtain cash, merchandise, services or goods. Through this conspiracy, the defendants were able to steal more than sixty thousand three hundred dollars (\$60,300.00) from the U.S. Postal Service and private individuals.

The remaining defendants, Yariel Vélez-Montero, aka "Abdiel Sandoval-Santiago," Julio A. Centeno-Santana; Wilmanuel Matos-Semidey, aka "Bobby;" Fernando Ramos-Ríos, aka "Tito;" Pedro Muñoz-Lugo; Javier Ayala-Camacho; Carmen Carrión-Delgado; Héctor López-Vélez, aka "Lopito;" Diahann Delgado-Rivera; Javish García-Colón and Jennifer Ramos-Mulero, are also implicated in the conspiracy, while defendant Vélez-Montero is also facing charges of Identity Theft and Aggravated Identity Theft, which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of two-years in prison.

"The U.S. Attorney's Office is committed to preventing financial crimes and protecting the privacy and identity of the citizens of Puerto Rico. We commend the outstanding efforts of the Inspectors of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the dedicated prosecutors and staff of the United States Attorney's Office. "Operation Rai\$ing Money" has proven to be a resounding success and demonstrates the commitment of Federal law

enforcement to protect the financial interests of the citizens of Puerto Rico,” said United States Attorney Rosa Emilia Rodríguez-Vélez.

“Once again, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service has collaborated successfully with the U.S. Attorney’s Office to comply with our mission of protecting the Postal Service and the many consumers who use it,” said Eliezer Julián, Team Leader of Mail Theft Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. “Every day we work tirelessly to identify and detain those criminals and/or criminal organizations that use the Postal Service as their means to commit fraudulent schemes. Today is a yet another example of our success.”

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Marshal D. Morgan.

Criminal indictments are only charges and not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed to be innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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